

House Armed Services Committee

DEMOCRATS

For immediate release: May 18, 2005

Ike Skelton, Ranking Member
<http://www.house.gov/hasc/democrats>

Contact:

Loren Dealy (HASC) 202-226-6339
Kira Mass (Reyes), 202-225-4831

Chuck Fant (Spratt) 202-225-5501
Hayley Rumbach (Tauscher) 202-225-1880

Committee Limits Studies of Nuclear Weapons

Washington D.C.—Today the House Armed Services Committee considered the portion of H.R.1815, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006, that falls under jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces.

****see the attached document for a complete statement released jointly by:****

Ranking Member Ike Skelton (MO)

Subcommittee Ranking Member Silvestre Reyes (TX)

Subcommittee Member John Spratt (SC)

Subcommittee Member Ellen Tauscher (CA)

Reliable Replacement Warhead

This bill includes a RRW study and charter with mandated objectives including: reducing the likelihood of future nuclear testing and shrinking the size of the nuclear stockpile.

“Given that there is no immediate need for a new RRW warhead, Democrats strongly believe that the National Nuclear Security Administration should utilize designs and components that are already understood or have already been proven through testing. The RRW program should be used as a reason not to resume nuclear testing,” declared **Rep. John Spratt (SC)**.

“The RRW program is simply a concept at this stage, and I intend to keep a close eye on its study,” added **Rep. Ellen Tauscher (CA)**. “Congress will not be in a position to know if the RRW program can meet the ambitious objectives set forth in this legislation until the Administration spells out the details of its plan.”

Rep. Silvestre Reyes (TX) noted, “This bill will produce a full accounting of the objectives, methods, and costs of the RRW program, but I will reserve final judgment until this forthcoming information can be evaluated.”

“The ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty should be the logical end-result of a successful RRW program, yet the majority adamantly refused to include this as an objective of the program,” said **Rep. Tauscher**.

Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator

Funds for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP) study will be transferred from the Energy Department to the Defense Department. The results of this study should be used primarily for conventional "bunker busters".

"Democrats applaud the fact that the committee took the 'N' out of 'RNEP'," said **Rep. Tauscher**. "Pursuit of a nuclear earth penetrating weapon impedes our nation's non-proliferation goals and continues to be opposed by a bipartisan group of members in the House."

"The RNEP program would have limited our nation's ability to build a global consensus against other nations' development of nuclear weapons and undercut our ability to take collective action against rogue nations or terrorists seeking to acquire nuclear weapons," added **Rep. Rick Larsen (WA)**.

"We strongly support efforts to defeat bunkers when necessary, however, we believe that conventional means are inherently more credible than nuclear options," commented **Rep. Reyes**. "Therefore, we believe the nation's security interests are best served by focusing our limited resources on conventional options rather than nuclear alternatives."

Missile Defense System

"Before we pour billions more into a missile defense system that has yet to prove reliable, we should demand greater results from the money we've already spent. While the idea of a missile defense system is a good one, the idea of buying the whole thing before we've seen it work consistently is just not logical," commented **Subcommittee Ranking Member, Silvestre Reyes (TX)**.

Rep. Ellen Tauscher (CA) offered an amendment to move testing design for the missile defense system from the Missile Defense Agency to the independent Office of Operational Test and Evaluation (OT&E).

"Testing of the missile defense system is currently the Missile Defense Agency's version of 'letting the fox guard the henhouse'," said **Rep. Tauscher**. "Requiring testing to be conducted by the OT&E would ensure testing guidelines that put success and reliability ahead of eagerness to proclaim a deployment."

Information is not considered final until committee passage of H.R.1815.

###